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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, July 24, 1936

Subject: "HOT-WEATHER BREADS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

This is the season when any housewife who values comfort gives her oven many a holiday. She knows from experience that baking heats up the kitchen much more than brief top-stove cooking. So to keep as cool as possible she goes light on cookies, cakes, breads, and pies. ~~These are energy foods, any-~~
~~way, and less necessary in the diet in hot weather.~~ Even the old-fashioned cook who usually abides by the traditional all-day-Saturday-baking rule makes an exception in midsummer.

But summer or winter, most people want some sort of bread at the meal. And very often a homemade bread will make a summer-dinner especially appetizing. Bread can take the place of a starchy vegetable in the menu and round out a lunch or supper mostly of green vegetables, fruits and some light meat dish. If you serve rolls or biscuit made with milk -- sweet milk, sour milk, or buttermilk, or if you serve muffins or other batterbreads that contain both milk and eggs, you add food values useful in summer as well as any other time of year. A meal with meat, eggs or fish, green vegetables or tomatoes, biscuits or muffins, fruit and milk has all the kinds of food we need.

If you are making homemade hot breads in summer, probably rolls, biscuits, muffins or other breads that you bake in small amounts are your best choices. They take much less time in the oven than loaves or thick layers of corn bread. For example, baking powder biscuits in any of their numerous varieties require only 10 to 15 minutes in the oven. Wheat and corn muffins need only 15 or 20 minutes. Even yeast rolls require only 15 to 20 minutes. As for griddle cakes and waffles, they're another choice for hot-weather meals if you have electric equipment for cooking them right at the table.

If you want to save yourself from making these breads during the heat of the day, count on your refrigerator. You can make up a couple of tins of baking-powder biscuit all ready to go in the oven early in the morning and keep them in the refrigerator until time to bake them for supper. Or, you can mix the dough and roll and cut the biscuits in the evening when it is cool and bake them when you need them on the following day.

Waffle and griddle-cake batter you can also keep safely overnight in a good refrigerator if the baking powder is stirred in just before using.

And then if you like yeast rolls, don't forget those that go by the name of refrigerator-rolls and are a boon to any housewife who wants to save herself on baking in summer. The dough for these rolls will keep 3 or 4 days or even a week in a good refrigerator.

Here are directions worked out by the foods people at the Bureau of Home Economics at Washington, D. C., for making refrigerator-rolls. During a cool and convenient time of day, mix the rolls. Soften a cake of compressed yeast in 1/4 cup of lukewarm water. Then add 1/2 cup of fat and 1/2 cup of sugar to 2 cups of scalded milk. Cool and add to 1 beaten egg. Then combine the mixture with the yeast and water. Now stir in 8 cups of sifted soft-wheat flour and one and 1/2 teaspoons of salt. Keep adding the flour until the dough is stiff enough to knead. Toss on a floured board and knead from 10 to 15 minutes until the dough is smooth and elastic. Put the dough in a greased bowl. Then grease the surface of the dough and keep it in a warm place until doubled in bulk. Turn out on the board, knead, grease the surface of the dough again, cover and put in the refrigerator.

When you are ready to use the rolls next day, cut off the amount of dough you need and shape it into rolls. Put the rolls in a baking pan set in a warm place where they can rise until they are double in bulk. Then bake them for 10 to 20 minutes in a hot oven -- 400 degrees Fahrenheit. The dough you have left in the refrigerator will keep there for 3 or 4 days, or even a week.

By the way, perhaps you noticed that this recipe for refrigerator rolls called for more sugar than usual in a yeast-roll recipe. This is because dough tends to lose its sweetness as it stands in the refrigerator.

One last point about keeping cool when you are making summer breads. The foods people suggest saving on mixing -- on elbow grease, you might say -- as much as possible. Too much beating or kneading may harm rather than help the bread. You see, the amount of kneading or stirring in wheat bread -- white or whole wheat -- affects the texture. In making drop biscuits, which have a dough soft enough to drop from a spoon, you get the best texture by barely mixing the ingredients. A flat, rolled baking powder biscuit which has a stiffer dough takes just a few strokes of kneading. A tall, flaky biscuit is best with about 18 strokes. As for wheat muffin-mixtures, they need only enough stirring to mix and moisten all the ingredients. More stirring makes muffins with tunnels inside and irregular peaks on top or over the side of the muffin pan. The reason for this is the gluten formed in the wheat flour, but I won't go into scientific explanations about the reaction of gluten during this hot weather. I'll just add that the matter of how much to stir is much less important with all cornmeal mixtures because cornmeal forms no gluten. But when a cornmeal mixture contains some wheat flour, you have to remember again not to overdo the stirring or beating.

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